



News & Events

University News & Information

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Cal Poly Chocolates Now Certified as Fair Trade

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Cal Poly Chocolates are now certified as ‘fair trade’ food items, a designation bestowed this week by the national organization TransFairUSA.

The designation places Cal Poly alongside universities including UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, UC Berkeley and UC Davis in either establishing Fair Trade clubs or selling Fair Trade certified products on campus. Cal Poly Chocolates is the only university-based Fair Trade Certified chocolate business in the United States.

“Fair Trade Certification means that all the white, milk, and dark chocolates we use to make Cal Poly Chocolates are manufactured from Fair Trade certified cocoa beans,” Neuhaus explained.

Fair trade cocoa comes from cocoa beans grown on certified farms and co-ops in tropical countries in Central and South America, the Caribbean, and West Africa. Buying cocoa beans from fair-trade farmers and co-ops adds on average 12 cents to a pound of chocolate, “but it ends up benefiting the farmer much more than that,” Neuhaus stressed.

“Fair trade purchasing acts as an international subsidy that provides a floor below which cocoa bean prices cannot fall. It’s a form of price stabilization for the tropical farmer,” Neuhaus said. “This is no different from the price floors and subsidies offered to American farmers who produce all the other ingredients in a bar of chocolate.”

It’s also a way to combat child slave labor in the Third World, Neuhaus stressed. It’s estimated that there are 15,000 children working as slaves in Ivory Coast, from which most American chocolate is derived. Under the current trading system, 100,000 children of cocoa farmers in Ivory Coast never have the opportunity to go to school. “Fair trade cooperatives do not permit such unfair conditions,” Neuhaus stressed.

About Cal Poly Chocolates

Neuhaus coordinates Cal Poly Chocolates as an enterprise project of the university’s Food Science and Nutrition Department. Neuhaus launched the enterprise project in 2000. Under the professor’s direction, students develop chocolate products in the class, and take them from concept to production, packaging, merchandizing, marketing and selling.

Cal Poly Chocolates include chocolate-dipped macadamia nuts, pretzels, graham crackers, apricots, cashew turtles, smores and more, all available by the bag or box. The enterprise also makes logo-customized chocolate bars for company or personal orders.

Cal Poly Chocolates has more than doubled 2005 production from 2004 production, and is currently selling \$40,000 worth of university chocolates annually. Cal Poly chocolates are sold on campus and in San Luis Obispo area grocery stores, delis and markets. For custom orders, contact Neuhaus at tneuhaus@calpoly.edu.

About Professor Tom Neuhaus

The professor has helped students start a Fair Trade Club on campus this year, and is working to encourage the entire community to become more aware of fair trade issues and support fair trade buying. The Fair Trade Club and members of another campus club, Students In Free Enterprise, are currently producing and selling an Africa-shaped peppermint chocolate cookie, and donating 50 cents of the proceeds from each to a fund for three Fair Trade Certified West African cocoa cooperatives.

Neuhaus will take a sabbatical leave during the fall and winter quarters of 2005, travel to Ivory Coast, Ghana, and Cameroon, visit cocoa farms and fair-trade co-operatives, and deliver the funds raised by the clubs.

About Fair Trade

Learn more about Fair Trade at www.transfairusa.org.

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